

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /075 W

-----053890 280320Z /14

R 271435Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2040

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MI

SUBJECT: MALAWI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: LILONGWE 901

1. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS JUNE 29 AND "CAMPAIGN" WHICH IS PRECEDING ELECTIONS ARE RELATIVELY LOW KEY. THERE HAS BEEN SOME MENTION OF ELECTIONS IN MALAWI'S ONE DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ON RADIO BUT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE BALLYHOO THAT ACCOMPANIES ELECTIONS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD INCLUDING OTHER LDCS.

2. MOST OF THE PAST THREE WEEKS, SINCE CANDIDATES WERE CONFIRMED JUNE 5, HAS SEEN PARTY OFFICIALS ACCOMPANYING GROUPS COMPRISING ALL CANDIDATES IN EACH CONSTITUENCY TOURING THE RURAL AREAS SO THAT CANDIDATES THEORETICALLY HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THE VOTING PUBLIC. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS SOURCES, THIS "ELECTIONEERING" HAS BEEN RATHER

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STRAIGHTFORWARD, LACKING IN DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL ISSUES AND RELATIVELY BRIEF WITH MOST TIME TAKEN BY LOCAL RESIDENTS ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE HOW PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL BE ABLE TO HELP WITH MINOR ASPECTS OF RURAL LIFE.

3. AS YET WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT JUNE 29 WILL

BE DECLARED PUBLIC HOLIDAY IN ORDER TO FACILITATE VOTING. NONETHELESS, WE EXPECT THAT VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE VERY HIGH BECAUSE OF: (A) NOVELTY OF NATIONWIDE ELECTION, (B) SOME FEAR BY VOTING PUBLIC THAT FAILURE TO VOTE MAY RESULT IN DIRECT OR INDIRECT GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST NON-VOTERS, AND (C) SOME GENUINE INTEREST IN SUPPORTING THE PARTY AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

4. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT PARTY OFFICIALS WILL, AS DISCREETLY AS POSSIBLE, THROW THEIR WEIGHT BEHIND CERTAIN CANDIDATES DURING ELECTIONEERING. THIS HAS NOT BEEN VERIFIED ALTHOUGH IT IS QUITE CONCEIVABLE THAT PARTY OFFICIALS, DESPITE PRESIDENT BANDA'S INSTRUCTIONS, MAY ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THE VOTE. ACCORDING TO PRESIDENT BANDA HIMSELF, 19 OR 20 CANDIDATES WITHDREW THEIR CANDIDACY BECAUSE "THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE COMPETITION." (IT IS NOT CLEAR IF THESE WITHDRAWALS TOOK PLACE PRIOR TO THE JUNE 5 ANNOUNCEMENT REPORTED REFTTEL OR SUBSEQUENTLY). BANDA ALSO REPORTEDLY STATED THAT "HE HAD WANTED AS MANY AS POSSIBLE TO CONTEST FOR THE SEATS. VOTERS SHOULD NOT BE BRIBED OR FRIGHTENED TO VOTE FOR ANYONE. 'IF ANYONE GIVES YOU MONEY TO VOTE FOR HIM, YOU SHOULD REPORT HIM TO ME AND THAT PERSON WILL BE FINISHED.'"

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5. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE COVERED BY BBC RADIO AND TV, LONDON TIMES, FINANCIAL TIMES AND POSSIBLY TIME MAGAZINE AND UPI--TV.

6. BANDA ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT HE DOES NOT EXPECT TO REAPPOINT ALL MINISTERS EVEN IF THEY WIN THEIR ELECTIONS BUT HE SAID THAT THAT SHOULD NOT BE MISCONSTRUED TO MEAN THAT THOSE NOT REAPPOINTED WERE NOT GOOD MEN.
SHEINBAUM

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